

APPEARED  
E1SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE  
30 January 1985

Wednesday, January 30, 1985

**BRIEFING****WHAT'S WRONG WITH  
U.S. INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES**

*The problems that plague the intelligence community are so deeply rooted that only fundamental changes can improve performance*

BY ALLAN GOODMAN

**T**he recent campaign for the White House, marking the third straight presidential election in which the American intelligence community's performance was a major issue.

From their members it is clear that President Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski all left office thinking intelligence had not served them well.

Moreover, ever since the debacle in Iran the Senate and House Select Committees on Intelligence have been sharply critical of the executive briefings they have received from the intelligence agencies.

As early as 1981, the Reagan administration's disengagement from Central America, proposed by former congressional leaders, the country's most senior and respected career military intelligence officer and deputy director of central intelligence said HRC.

James told several audiences that the U.S. intelligence community's performance was at its lowest level since World War II.

"And in the wake of the most recent bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, proposed legislation has come from congressional sources about 'the near destruction of our intelligence capability,' while presidential spokesman Larry Speakes responded on 'a determined effort of a select congressional committee' that resulted in inadequate funding and support for intelligence-gathering capabilities."

Intelligence and foreign-policy professionals should take such criticism seriously, despite the political circumstances and motives that may have generated it.

Many intelligence operatives have left the profession wondering if the community has become



too fragmented. Sophisticated collectors and analysts have actually impeded the sharing of information. And rival agencies in stiff competition for financing prepare more disjointed analyses than the nation's intelligence system needs enough accurate, timely, or complete information to make policy makers.

Unfortunately, such problems have plagued the intelligence community for more than a decade and are as deeply rooted that only fundamental change in the system will improve performance.

**Intelligence Failures**

The quality of intelligence provided by the community has been improving, but not for some time. There have been at least 20 alleged intelligence failures to major crises, like the Cuban missile crisis, the Iran hostage crisis, the 1979 bombing of the Argentine air attaché in Paris, the assassination of the Soviet nuclear buildup, led to incompleteness about America's own armament and the need to modernize it.

U.S. intelligence agencies also have failed to anticipate military attacks and to identify tactics and targets in time to act. The intelligence community has not conducted correctly the use of force by one state to achieve its aims over another.

These failures include the North Korean attack on South Korea in 1950; the risk to the USSR

and Libya before the creation of the anti-terrorist command "Decoyforce" in Cuba in 1979. Such misjudgments have all been extremely costly to U.S. security. Some of these failures have led to major crises, like the Cuban missile crisis, the 1979 bombing of the Argentine air attaché in Paris, the assassination of the Soviet nuclear buildup, led to incompleteness about America's own armament and the need to modernize it.

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In each of these cases, intelligence failure or mistakes policy was at fault. But to blame the policy-maker for the failure, as many intelligence professionals have done, would be a serious mistake.

However, the policy-makers

reached their conclusions, they were guided by faulty intelligence analysis or poorly served by the intelligence or incomplete dissemination of reports by the intelligence community.

**The Iran Debacle**

The most hotly debated intelligence failure of the 1980s was the Iran debate. Accurately, a series of policy errors along with a lack of policy toward the Shah led to the capture of the U.S. Embassy in November 1979 and destroyed vital American economic and security interests in the region.

To be sure, as the consultants who compiled the CIA's postmortem on Iran later discovered, not a single member of out of government forecast the ascent of Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution.

rarely been predicted correctly, but U.S. intelligence agencies and their analysts failed over and over to come close.

The episode raised many questions and the following day, then-Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Brezhnev, and then-director of Central Intelligence, Admiral Donaldson Turner,

"To Cy, Zbog, Dan — I am not satisfied with the quality of your professional intelligence. Assess our assets and, as soon as possible, give me a report concerning our ability to handle international crises of the world. Make a joint recommendation on what we should do to improve your ability to give me political information and advice."

At the senior level, new priorities

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**When Pressure Forces a CIA Officer to Quit**

BY JOHN MORTON

**L**ast year I resigned as National Intelligence Officer for Latin America because the position put me under the direction of central intelligence — William Casey — to come up with a National Intelligence Estimate on Mexico that would satisfy him.

This is not the first time that pressure has been put on intelligence officers to come up with what their superiors consider to be the right answer.

A previous director not long ago was told he was to be made a "leader" because the estimates on Southeast Asia that were being written under his direction were not pleasing to the policy-makers at the time — the estimate didn't say that our policy in Vietnam was wrong.

In my case, it was not that the policy-makers were putting pressure on the director, but rather that the pressure on me and others working on the Mexico

estimate came from the director himself.

Nothing will get an intelligence officer back up faster than a smile and a pat on the pressure in his portfolio. It is a matter of pride that he has not intelligence judgments to make them more palatable to his superior or to diminish the gravity of approval on his part.

A National Intelligence Estimate is not simply an intelligence report or a bit of analysis, nor should it be any one man's opinion. It is the product of the deliberation of representatives of all the intelligence agencies dealing with foreign affairs.

As a member of the National Intelligence Council, the national intelligence officer shares the writing of the estimate. This may give him more influence than the representative from CIA, from State, from Navy or Air Force or the Marines, or from the Defense Intelligence Agency. It may not.

But the reader should reflect the views of all the agencies and differences in their views. It is not or should not be blindly unanimous, and it should reflect doubts as well as disagreements.

In 1978, a distinguished intelligence officer, in testifying before the Senate, spoke of the "natural forces" that were at work in creating a "leader" because the estimates on Southeast Asia that were being written under his direction were not pleasing to the policy-makers at the time — the estimate didn't say that our policy in Vietnam was wrong.

Much has been said — and no doubt much more will be said — that the source of policy-making is the policy-makers and not the intelligence. Policy-makers must assume the integrity of the intelligence products and avoid attempts to get materials suited to their tastes.

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estimate came from the director himself.

Strong-minded officials often think they know better than intelligence officers. Attempts to impose their own judgment on intelligence reports or to have an administrator's point of view is a non-practice prevalent.

William Casey, the current director, may differ from previous directors of national intelligence, but he is a part of the policy-making group where Central America is involved as much as he is the president's chief intelligence officer. His similar career led to a host of bills to expand the powers of future directors from the cover services to prevent political bias being put in the job.

That may appeal to an intelligence officer who has an unswerving respect for our own virtues, but no legislature can ensure that a director, no matter how experienced in our work, will not succumb under pressure.

We should face the reality that there are good people and integrity are important qualities of opinions they consider to be wrong or inconvenient. A taste of power may make us arrogant. The natural tendency will continue.

If we accept this as inevitable, our aim should be to reduce the confusion. I propose that we do no longer have a single intelligence officer — a single controller — as not in the public conscience, since intelligence matters cannot by their nature be thrown open to public scrutiny and since the service heads of intelligence units have been freed from operational control.

This concept would sit with the director when he is being governed by the policy-makers, hold his hand when temptation hounds

John Morton was a CIA operations officer from 1969 to 1973 and served on the National Intelligence Council from May 1980 to May 1984.

**GREAT DECISIONS '85****Starting Next Week**

**T**his year marks the 25th year of the Great Decisions program, sponsored nationally by the Foreign Policy Association. Next week is the beginning of the Great Decisions '85 program, which consists of eight weekly meetings in communities throughout America to discuss significant U.S. foreign policy issues.

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# How to Improve U.S. Intelligence

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**ties were set for political intelligence in 40 countries whose stability was judged directly to affect major American interests.**

The group intended more resources to hire expert political analysts — not collectors — and decreed greater coordination in the collection of political intelligence between the Foreign Service and the intelligence community.

The only tangible result achieved by the group, however, was a substantial expansion of reporting requirements that fell largely on clandestine collectors because the Foreign Service was not given the staff resources to respond.

During his 1980 presidential campaign Reagan pledged to make improved intelligence one of his top priorities. Once elected, he appointed his campaign manager William Casey as director of central intelligence.

## Politics and the CIA

Casey moved decisively and rapidly to bring in his own team to reorganize the analytic part of the CIA along geographic lines, to parallel the organization of the operations directorate, and to substantially increase the National Foreign Intelligence Program budget.

According to a Jan. 16, 1983, New York Times Magazine report by Philip Taubman, the CIA is the fastest-growing major federal agency. Its 25 percent budget increase in fiscal year 1983 exceeded even the Pentagon budget's 18 percent growth that year.

Although the intelligence budget's size is classified, Taubman quotes congressional sources as pegging the cost of annual CIA operations at more than \$1.5 billion.

In his exhaustive 1983 study, "The Puzzle Palace," James Bamford reports that estimates of the supersecret National Security Agency's budget run "as high as \$10 billion."

Yet little improvement is apparent with respect to the accuracy of the intelligence community's product.

Charges of intelligence failures have surfaced over estimates of the Soviet military buildup, the accuracy of arms-control monitoring, the threat against the U.S. Embassy and the Marine barracks in Beirut, the ability of the Lebanese army, the future and extent of the Cuban presence in Grenada, and the likely outcome of elections in El Salvador, well as that country's domestic difficulties in general.

Another major congressional and public concern has been the criticism of the position of the



CIA Director William Casey

CIA director in the Reagan administration.

The appointment of Casey and his elevation to cabinet status have put the intelligence community deeply into the policymaking arena.

In the atmosphere of a National Security Council meeting, the cabinet room, and the Oval Office itself, the central intelligence director can be tempted, if not basically inclined, to take sides and to express a policy preference.

Yet the temptation is an important one to resist, especially for the president's sake. As the president's principal adviser, only the CIA director can provide the security council with assessments independent of policy preferences.

## Report on Lebanon

The trend today at the CIA and elsewhere in the intelligence community is to tailor the product to the needs and nuances of policy debate.

As one senior intelligence officer said in an interview, "Casey comes back here from the White House looking for reports to buttress his stand. He does not ask us for a review of an issue or a situation. He wants material he can use to persuade his colleagues, justify controversial policy, or expand the agency's involvement in covert action."

A case in point is Lebanon. Casey repeatedly returned drafts of one National Intelligence Estimate for revision with the notation "try again."

Many analysts think Casey was dissatisfied with the National Intelligence Estimate's conclusion that the government of Lebanese Presi-

dent Amin Gemayel, and especially its army, were not viable and that they would not be significantly strengthened by a U.S. Marine presence.

## What Is Needed

The immediate need is for an overhaul of the analytic career service and production process that will correct patterns of thinking and of management that have contributed to past intelligence failures.

A central, community-wide foreign-intelligence data base should be created to assure that an analyst working on a specific problem would have access to all the information collected.

Analysts also should be provided with incentives to do more reflective writing and research. Work and travel abroad should be facilitated and a thorough, substantive review procedure for all products and publications should be developed. These steps would greatly improve the accuracy and quality of the intelligence product.

Analysts must also pay more attention to distinguishing between what they know and do not know, to identifying judgments based on specific evidence vs. those based on speculation, and to making projections about the future.

Reorganizing the way U.S. intelligence services collect, analyze and disseminate the knowledge essential for national decision-making should be a high priority.

In particular, a return to the concept of central intelligence collection and analysis would help improve the performance of both tasks. Such centralization, along with the separation of collectors from analysts, would break down agency-erected barriers to the badly needed sharing of all information.

Thus the United States should establish a central collection agency, able to command and mix human and technical intelligence collectors to use each most effectively.

Also needed is a central agency for research and analysis where, again, the best talent can be deployed to work on a problem in as much depth as required. These two agencies should replace the CIA, NSA, and other intelligence organizations.

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